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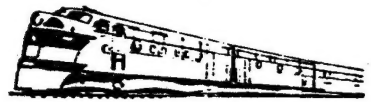
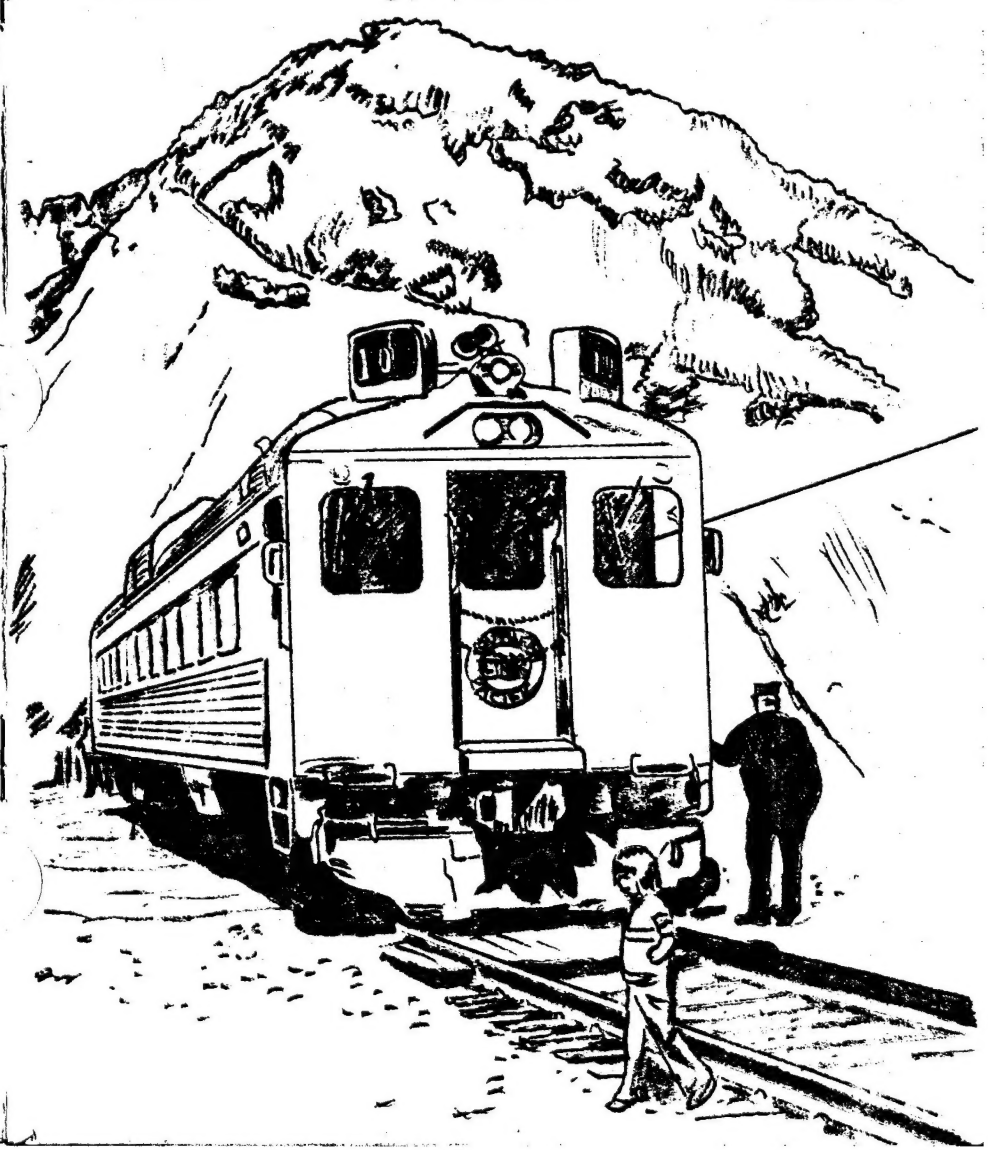


Volume 1 April 19, 1971 Number 10



ON THE COVER: The Northwestern Pacific's train no. 3, the REDWOOD, is pictured at Island Mountain, California, 90 miles and 3 hours southeast of Eureka. The drawing is after a photo by editor James Russell, to accompany his article elsewhere in this issue, "Remembering the Redwood." The original photo was a 35mm shot on Tri-X film.

THE CANNONBALL, once the Wabash Cannonball, is the subject of Paul Rayton's scrutiny in the second in our series of stories called KEEPING TRACK, serialized from Paul's upcoming book on the pre-Railpax trains of America. The appearance of the article is perhaps especially timely, as a lobby to preserve the train is being organized by J. H. Brown, 1803 E. Glenoaks Blvd., Glendale, Calif.

LETTERS

I have been receiving Rail Travel Newsletter since December and look forward to it twice each month.

I would just like to say I enjoy each issue entirely since it keeps me informed about all the passenger news, especially now with Railpax coming up. I wish that it came out weekly.

I do not know of any other periodical dealing just with the passenger aspect of railroads. Are there any?

Raymond R. Hawkes

Gorham, Maine

(For the benefit of Mr. Hawkes and other readers, we list here other sources of passenger train information:)

"Passenger Train Survey" is a monthly feature of RAILROAD Magazine. $6 a year from R.R. Magazine, Portland Pl., Boulder, Colo. 80302.

PASSENGER TRAIN JOURNAL appears quarterly; $4 a year. 300 Independence Ave. S.E., Washington D.C. 20003.

Membership in National Association of Rail Passengers includes monthly newsletter. $5 a year and up, from 417 New Jersey Ave. S.E., Washington D.C. 20003.

OFFICIAL GUIDE OF THE RAILWAYS lists all current train schedules monthly. $6.40 a copy from Nat'l Rwy. Publ. Co., 424 W. 33rd St., New York, N.Y. 10001.

Have we overlooked others?

Rail Travel Newsletter, Vol 1, No 10, April 19, 1971. Published twice monthly, on the 1st and 3rd Mondays, by Message Media, PO Box 9007, Berkeley CA 94709 USA. Subscription $4 a year; 25¢ a copy. Editor: James Russell.

Call it Amtrak!

The National Rail Passenger Corporation, until now popularly known as "Railpax," officially announced April 19 that the nickname it has chosen for itself is "Amtrak." The word is an abbreviation of "American" and "track," and was chosen over a name that included "rail" in order to avoid connotations of poor service associated with American railroading, and also to allow the name to be applicable to such non-rail future vehicles as high-speed air cushion trains. About 1000 names were considered before "Amtrak" was chosen, including such runners-up as "Unitrak," "Span," and "Trak."

The public relations firm of Lippincott & Margulies in New York, specialists in changing public images of large concerns, did the work. It also announced the official colors--red, white and blue--and the trade mark of the rail corporation. The trade mark, in the official colors, is said to suggest a feathered end of an arrow in flight, but no illustration was available as we go to press.

All Amtrak trains will be painted in these colors and will bear the Amtrak name and trademark. In addition, depots, tickets, schedules and other material will carry the trademark rather than that of an individual railroad.

The trains, which will initially consist of about 1500 of the best of 3000 railroad cars available (the rest will be scrapped) will eventually be remodeled with such proposed features as wall-to-wall carpeting and simulated wood grain paneling. Trains will carry conductors and "hosts," with hostesses on some. Uniforms will be dark blue slacks and red blazers for hosts, with the Amtrak trademark affixed.

Special innovations on trains patterned after European ideas are being considered. These include, for population corridor runs, stenographers and dictation machines for businessmen, as well as entertainment cars offering food, drink and jazz combos. On longer runs, the successful SCL Florida Special will provide a model for recreation activities that include movies, television, and games. Also being considered are such French ideas as boutiques, barber shops, showers, and beauty parlors. To attract young people to the trains, Amtrak will appeal to their concern for nature and the environment. How this will be done was not spelled out, however.

Dining facilities are still a question mark. At first, Amtrak will run traditional dining cars. However, Arthur D. Lewis, a former president of Eastern Airlines and one of the 8 Amtrak incorporators, has doubts that the gracious service of the past that is identified with railroad diners can be main-

tained because of the cost. He noted that rail travelers now rarely use dining cars, so that plans are underway, in conjunction with American Airlines, to develop hot meals served at coach seats in the manner of the airlines.

American Airlines is also consulting about ticket arrangements. It is hoped that a toll-free telephone circuit can be arranged, so that a person anywhere in the country could dial for an instant reservation on any train anywhere. Unlimited travel tickets, good for a certain time period, ala Eurailpass, are proposed. Rail tours will be promoted, and discount fares for students are on the agenda.

advertising

A large advertising campaign will begin within a few months after the start of Amtrak operation, to allow time for some of these changes to be wrought. The ad budget will be about $4 million at first, increasing to $8 million a year. The New York ad firm of Ted Bates and Co. will handle the campaign, which, according to Amtrak incorporator Catherine May Bedell, will involve "hard sell" techniques. Ted Bates, the nation's fourth largest ad agency, is known in part for its Colgate-Palmolive Rapid Shave TV commercial that showed sandpaper being shaved and which evoked a 1965 Supreme Court false advertising decision.

schedules

When May 1 arrives, the only stepped up train frequency will be New York-Washington, where 2 Metroliners will be added, for a total of 9. An entertainment car will eventually be added on this run, and on some of the Boston-N.Y. trains. By May 1 Amtrak promises to have issued a complete timetable for the nation.

Catherine May Bedell, at a San Francisco press conference April 12 revealed a preliminary--not finalized--schedule for the West Coast through train (Seattle-San Diego). It would leave Seattle Monday, Thursday and Saturday, and run northbound Sunday, Wednesday and Friday. Seattle departure time is tentatively 12:15pm, arriving Oakland 8:45am, L.A. 7pm, and San Diego 9:30pm. Total time is 1 hour 45 minutes less than the present 35-hour trip. This saving results from eliminating changes of trains. These schedules generally follow closely the present timetable, and the northbound times likewise, although presently there is no northbound connection from San Diego to L.A. without laying over one night in L.A. Mrs. Bedell said that daily L.A.-Oakland service would follow a similar schedule, leaving L.A. at 9:45am. The final schedules are due to be announced by the time the next (May 3) issue of RTN appears.

Santa Fe

Santa Fe formally announced April 20 that it will join Amtrak. Santa Fe routes used by Amtrak will be those of the Super Chief, the Texas Chief, and the San Diegans. Routes dropped will be the San Francisco Chief's San Joaquin Valley route, that of the Tulsan, and the La Junta-Denver connection.

May 1 changes

When Amtrak gets going May 1 there will be little noticeable change in the trains running, aside from altered schedules. The innovations Amtrak is planning will not occur overnight. Tickets will still be purchased through individual railroads, although as of now the roads have no authority to sell space after April 30. They can place travelers' names on a waiting list pending further instructions from Amtrak.

April 30 will see the last passenger trains operating into and out of San Francisco. After that Oakland will be the single rail hub of the area. The last passenger train to leave S.F. will be the SP Del Monte to Monterey at 4:50. The last to arrive will be the Coast Daylight at 6:15pm.

The last Santa Fe S.F. Chief will leave Richmond, Calif., at 4:30pm April 30. The last westbound Chief will arrive there at 10:00am May 2.

Penn Central

$54.2 million is the cost of PC's joining Amtrak. Trustees of the bankrupt road said it can afford this fee without more borrowing, since it will receive over $267 million in cash from Amtrak over the next 7 years as reimbursement for running passenger trains. The New Haven is opposed to PC's joining Amtrak, and a court decision is expected April 23.

Rail Workers

As many as 15,000 rail employees will be laid off when Amtrak gets going. Amtrak, the roads and the unions could not agree on a formula for reimbursing fired personnel, so Labor Secretary James Hodgson announced April 16 a plan whereby the roads pay workers their salary for up to 6 years, or an optional lump sum. However, the Congress of Railway Unions' management found this plan unacceptable and will fight it in court. The unions announced they hadn't decided whether or not to attempt to block the start of Amtrak.

Rail workers who continue to be employed will stay on the payroll of their respective railroads, which will be reimbursed by Amtrak.

Some Amtrak people are reportedly concerned about the fact that employees remaining will largely be older workers with more seniority. The concern is that it will be difficult to inspire them with new enthusiasm for running trains after many years of railroad brainwashing that passengers don't count in a rail system.

KEEPING TRACK

...with Paul Rayton

(A regular RTN feature. Each issue presents another review-critique of a selected pre-Railpax train.)

(WABASH) CANNONBALL

Date: Tuesday, August 25, 1970

Ever since the Norfolk and Western took over the old Wabash Railroad, there have been various efforts to discontinue the Detroit-to-St. Louis run that they inherited from the Wabash. The train is still running as of today, but it exists as a mute testament to the attitude of management and staff: disinterested. The Official Guide still says WABASH CANNON BALL but in the station in Detroit it was posted simply as "THE CANNON BALL".

It was clear from the outset on this day that the "high-ball" was not out for the CANNONBALL. As departure time approached passengers milled around the station, no one knowing exactly where to go or what to do. And small wonder: there was no announcement made for the train or of the fact that the train was apparently not ready for boarding. Most of us had figured that out anyway--particularly when the 6:15am departure time arrived and passed and we were still standing around like so many cows.

About 6:30am we saw, through great iron gates, signs of motion down about the tracks. A crew gathered and after a lot of miscellaneous gesticulation and discussion they grudgingly decided that passengers would indeed be let aboard the train.

Grateful for a place to sit down, we entered into our two-car home for the next 10 hours and 5 minutes. Both of the coaches were found to be reasonably clean, the windows had even had a half-hearted attempt made at making them clean. We decided on the second car, i.e. the last car.

At 6:40am we creaked out of the station. Out the open back end of the car I watched Detroit and Fort Street Station recede into the distance. It was then time for the long, slow pull through the industrial areas south and west of the city.

While we traveled out toward the greener pastures of Indiana and Illinois, I scrutinized the coaches for hints of their past. The first coach was reasonably well filled and could be been to be a veteran of service on the Denver and Rio Grande Western RR. This was obvious through its design and interior decor. It was one of those coaches that is bisected into two separate seating sections by a large, mirrored "divider" across the center of the car. If you can imagine looking down from above onto a plan of this car, this divider would, with the rest of the walls, give the impression of a "C-". The mirror is the "-" and the "C" is a sort of curving wall that surrounds the mirror. It acts as a baffle and serves to insulate noises from the respective sections. This curving space inspired someone--D&RGW or the Budd Co.--to mount on this surface a large color map of the routes of the D&RGW. No such expense was lavished by the N&W, so there we were, riding across Indiana with a big map of Colorado to keep us company.

The two-sectioned arrangement of this car did provide a markedly quieter ride and the appointments in the interior of this car were more pleasing than those of its companion in today's consist.

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The second car, the "Buffet Coach", was similarly divided into two sections, but this time instead of a dividing wall, there was a small snack bar/grill in the middle of the car. Again, at either end, five or six rows of seats comprised the seating section. At least the seats were reasonably comfortable. They had been refurbished recently, with a green fabric covering over the seats, and a cloth headrest prominently displaying a big red "N&W" (Their new, modern-style logo).

The lunch counter itself was a large semi-circle, with 8 or 9 stools arranged along the outer perimeter. Also available were two tables out in the seating section which were reserved for those eating and/or drinking. The attendant stood inside this semi-circle, surrounded by his customers and the accoutrements of his office. On this day, there were two men working the counter, but I gathered that that happened only on weekends or days with heavy holiday traffic. With two men working, service was prompt. However, the cook told how it could sometimes get pretty crowded when he was working alone and then, as he said, "They just have to wait until I get to 'em. I ain't goin' to hurry around for nobody."

Traveling with us were about 50-55 passengers and several "deadheading" employees who were traveling for free. At this early hour everybody was ready for breakfast.

I am fascinated by the red tape of railroads; they should haul a special car at the head end of every train with the trip supply of tape. For example, as encountered here: The N&W "Snack Menu" listed a fried egg sandwich (.60) and a grilled cheese sandwich (.70). Deduction: among the supplies, at a bare minimum, are bread, cheese, and eggs. Question: was there any way that the grill attendant could use some eggs and cheese and mix them together to create a cheese omelet? Answer: no way. Reason?: there was no specific, menu-set price for those items served in that specific way. Their sandwiches were all pre-priced and ritualized, and no creativity or variation from those rules of the day was allowed.

If a man has a special talent, why not let him use those talents? If he knows how to make cheese omelettes (he said he did) why not let him make it and sell it? Or perhaps he makes a specialty of his own brand of home fries. Why not? We would all benefit. He could take more pride in his job; we could get more selection of edibles.

As we sped across the farmlands, I found a window near the counter, and watched trees and fields race by while our breakfast was cooking. We settled for bacon and eggs, scrambled ($1.65). The eggs tasted all right, though I would have preferred more agitation of the raw materials. As a result, they were runny. The bacon was good, crisp and tasty. Toast was included, with little individual packs of jelly.

For drinks, there was coffee for .20 and tea was advertised for .35 per pot. Today, however, for some reason (and probably every day, I suspect) there was no hot water for tea. The boiler is being used to prepare and store hot coffee. (Tea drinkers are a distinct minority on the CANNONBALL.) So I confined myself to a drink of milk (.25) and waited for the coffee "rush hour" to pass. My wife had the coffee which, at least, came hot and roundly flavored.

After breakfast we returned to our seats. We had been so

continued on page 10

Remembering the Redwood

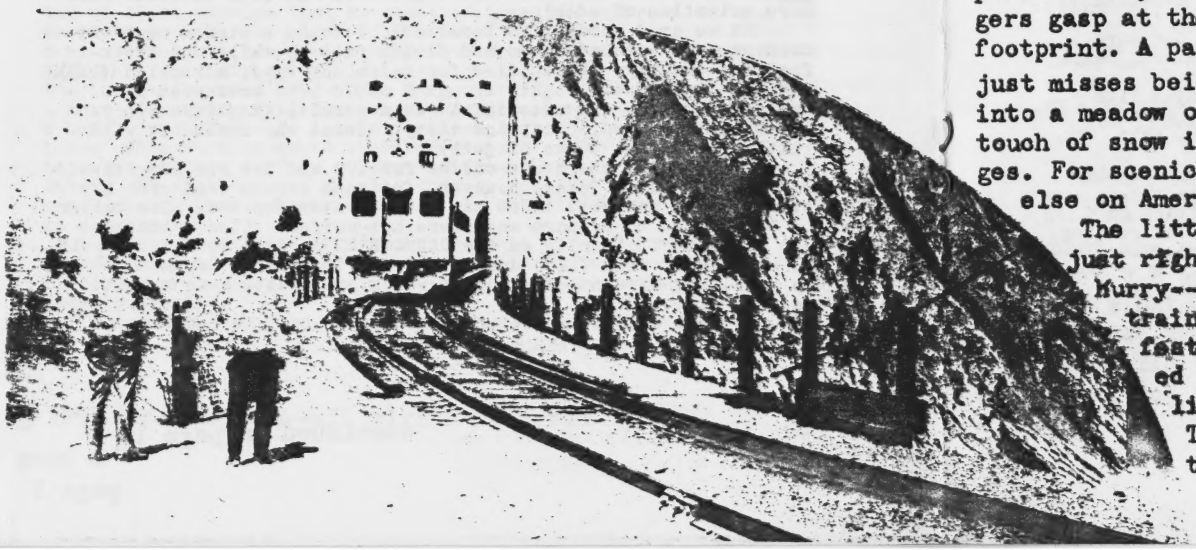
By Jim Russell

In the wilds of northwestern California is a little train--just a Budd rail diesel car--that follows the winding Eel River between Willits and Eureka. It's not advertised; no one you talk to knows about it ("Oh! You mean the Skunk!"), but it's one of the scenic wonders of America, another of those rare pleasures disappearing amid a growing, polluting, suffocating population that destroys all the really fine things it has.

May Day will sound its death knell, when Amtrak picks up the tab for 184 population-corridor trains and the rest are left to die quietly. By no means does it cover a population corridor. In fact, the very charm of it is the fantastic pristine quality of the wilds it traverses.

The Northwestern Pacific Railroad formerly ran passenger and commute trains all the way from Eureka to San Francisco, the crossing from Marin County being by ferry. Now NWP is owned and controlled by the mighty Southern Pacific, and its one remaining twice-weekly train will be abandoned.

An early April weekend saw the little Willits station teeming with people. Most had come to ride the widely advertised Skunk and Super Skunk of California Western. But the Redwood (NWP trains 3 & 4) was also filled with fans out to ride it a last time. We came from San Francisco on the Greyhound connection to check out the service (rail tickets are honored on the bus). We almost didn't make departure time--our bus left S.F. 45 minutes late, and by skipping a lunch stop managed to connect. Since the train has no food aboard, a quick 2-block dash to a market gave us provisions for the 4½ hr., 25 mph jaunt.



Shortly the Budd car leaves the adjoining highway & takes off into the wilderness. It's a gorgeous clear day and wildflowers bloom from every meadow, nook and cranny of the rugged countryside. The river is still muddy from recent rains.

Soon the only sign of civilization is the single track. No power lines, roads or other disfigurements are seen. Passengers gasp at the miles of sandy river beaches, not a human footprint. A pair of deer run from the train horn. A squirrel just misses being crushed under the squealing wheels, dives into a meadow of wild lavender iris. Beyond the green hills a touch of snow is visible on a higher portion of the Coast Ranges. For scenic beauty this trip equals or surpasses anything else on American railroads.

The little Budd car is a delight. The slow speed is just right for viewing the scenery. There's no sense of hurry--the perfect antidote to the city rat-race. The train is truly a pleasure palace: everyone's in a festive weekend mood, gourmet box lunches are hauled out, on all sides the endless scenery goes on like some natural cinerama film surrounding us. The gentle undulations of the car bring relaxation, coax smiles upon all lips. The polluted,

continued on page 13

DISCONTINUANCE OF SERVICE

Effective May 1, 1971, the operation by North[illegible] Pacific Railroad Company of Trains Nos. 3 and 4, Redwood, the termini of which are Willits and Eureka, California, will be discontinued. Intermediate stations affected are Outlet, Longvale, Tarloy, Dos Rios, Nashmead, Island Mountain, Alderpoint, Fort Seward, South Fork, Shively, Scotia, Alton, Fortuna, Fernbridge and South Bay, California.

The following statement is made in accordance with Interstate Commerce Commission Order of March 11, 1971, in Ex Parte No. 217:

> The subject trains are intercity and entitled to be discontinued by virtue of Section 401(a)(1) of the Rail Passenger Service Act of 1970 (___ U.S.C. ___) and, therefore, the Interstate Commerce Commission cannot entertain protests since the discontinuance is not within its jurisdiction. Any filing of a notice of discontinuance under this section shall not, under any circumstances, invoke the Commission's jurisdiction under Section 13a(1) of the Interstate Commerce Act.

NORTHWESTERN PACIFIC RAILROAD COMPANY

One Market Street
San Francisco, California 94105

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busy exploring our train it was not until now that we discovered that our original seats, near the front of this second car, were entirely too close to the door--a horrible creaking sound was coming from the vestibule where the two coaches butted together. The door was unequal to the task of suppressing the noise, and it was entirely too loud for peaceful traveling. We relocated ourselves to the other end of the car, where all was well.

The engineer was apparently trying to make up some of the time we lost back in Detroit, as we were ripping right along. I thought back to the old days--days I never knew--when this must have been a really fast train. The land is level, just right for a high speed run; the tracks were straight and smooth. When they said "CANNONBALL" back then, I'll bet they really meant it. But today's schedule takes a whole 40 minutes longer than the scheduled time even in 1958!

Between Wabash and Williamsport (Ind.), the most notable sight was the Wabash River, which this route more or less parallels. However for the most part views of this river were confined to quick glimpses as we passed over it on some bridges.

We continued across Indiana and each stop showed that we were getting closer to schedule. At Peru we were down by only 5 minutes, and we were right on time as we headed on into Illinois.

Outside was one of those ideal summer days--the sky was as blue as the Great Northern painted it, and the puffs of clouds in the air looked pleasantly inviting, resting over the little towns through which we rolled.

I was disturbed from my reveries by the realization that, as the day was warming up, so was our coach. Swell! an air-conditioning failure. And, of course it would be in the car with the hot grill, adding cooking heat to the heat now being provided by Nature. Some clever person decided that it would be better than nothing if he were to open the doors at either end of the car, allowing at least some air circulation. That was fine for a while, until I realized that an unusually heavy layer of dust was coming in along with the wind and depositing itself on the seats, the floors, the tables, the windows--and us. Moving to the forward car was by now impossible: others had spotted the problem earlier and moved there already. We hadn't much choice for the moment but to sit and grit our teeth.

And then we got put "in the hole" for a meet. Now a second and more annoying problem with our ventilation became evident: we were now out in farm country and were stopped out in the fields. And all those delicious smells of the Buffet Car were attracting every fly in the neighborhood. So, thus we sat, helpless, swatting the flies, wishing that they would go away. Unfortunately the flies did not see it our way and stayed with us until we started moving again and they, mercifully, were blown away. But this was to happen several more times, this stopping and meeting some of the "natives" for snacks.

This session "in the hole" cost us additionally our on-time classification. Once again we were 20 minutes off schedule. From the comments of the crew I gathered that such waiting on a siding is not an unusual event. What were our chances of getting in on time? Nobody knew, but I got the feeling that they were accustomed to coming in at irregular hours.

At lunch time we decided to brave the heat of the grill and try the "Special Cheeseburger" with potato chips and dill

pickle for $1.10. (Served as "Deluxe Hamburger" for $1.00) This, grilled on the stove, turned out to be acceptable. The meat was standard cafe product--frozen, adequate. There was certainly nothing "special" or "deluxe" about these dishes. They came as stated, with a small leaf of lettuce on the side. Just for comparison, I might add that this $1.10 cost was more expensive than the same item would cost on other railroads on which I have ridden; and at the same time it was cheaper than some other lines. By now the coffee-crush was over, and the man had hot water to make tea. Satisfaction!

These hamburger sandwiches were about the heaviest food that one could order on this train. Chili was available from a can (.60) but other choices were limited to various hot or cold sandwiches: bacon and tomato .90; grilled ham .90. A gaggle of kids came up and loaded themselves down with burgers and chips from the counter. Oblivious to the heat and dust, they at least were having fun today. Sodas were popular (even at .30) and other drinks available ran from lemonade (.45) to beer (.50) to various mixed drinks ($1.00-$1.20).

Our lunch wasn't made any more enjoyable by the opressive heat and winged multitude that accompanied us. I felt it could have been a typical scene on a train in Mexico--except that nobody was speaking Spanish.

At each slowdown or stop, the acrid smell of brakes being applied wafted in through the open door, adding fresh layers to the accumulating grime. During all this, we enjoyed the experience for what it was worth, but we did agree that the train was mis-named: it really should be the "WABASH MOTHBALL".

But still and all, the "Mothball" offeres real food en route. While it is not a gen-u-wine dining car, there at least was a man aboard who would cook things to order. And this was just a two car train. I couldn't help thinking back a few weeks to a ride on Southern Pacific's "COAST DAYLIGHT". There, with eight coaches and easily 150 hungry people aboard, all that anyone could get to eat was stuff from a coin machine. There must be some twentieth-century truism in all this, but I couldn't put my finger on it.

The situation became still more grubby inside our coach. I wandered up to the car in front now and again seeking a breath of their clean, cool air and a respite from our own hot dirt.

The afternoon continued on, with the train alternately going, then stopping to wait for another train. No sooner would we start to make up some of our time dificit than we would be brought to a stop by another red light. Somebody out there in CTC-land must have been afraid that we might get in on time. I must give the engine crew credit for trying, though. We probably lost a total of 30 minutes during these unscheduled stops across Illinois.

After each station, I would go forward again and reconnoiter the seat situation. We were hoping against hope that some people would get off at a stop before St. Louis and we might then move up to the cleaner car. We eventually did get seats there but as luck would have it, only for the last 20 miles of the trip.

We finally pulled into St. Louis. The Union Station there is one of those into which trains are backed in to the platforms. Our feet hit the ground at 4:30pm, just 10 minutes late. A little heads-up railroading out in the yards would have put us in on time--but nobody seemed to care. And even the 20-out-of-30-minutes that we had made up were not so remarkable when you note

that the schedule allows a full 50 minutes to cover just 8.3 miles from Granite City, Illinois to St. Louis Union Station.

But this was no time for idle speculations; we were glad to be arrived. We headed directly for a hotel and the showers.

COMMUTING AND RAPID TRANSIT

A Transit Strike in Philadelphia

A strike began April 12 when the Southeastern Pennsylvani Transportation Authority was struck by 5200 members of the Transportation Workers Union. Buses, trolleys and subways were affected, but not rail transit. Penn Central and Reading both put on extra trains to handle commuters. About one million commuters were affected by the strike. Two union leaders were sentenced to 6-month jail terms because of the action, and then ordered union members back to work. They were released, but the strike continued. As of April 16 the workers refused to return to their jobs.

Secret Transit Meetings Held in San Francisco

The American Transit Association held meetings in S.F. last week, and newsmen were irked when they found themselve barred from entering by uniformed guards. Spokesmen for BART, the San Francisco Muni Railway, the S.F. Public Utilities Commission, and AC Transit (a public transit system i the Eastbay area) were either surprised or apologetic when it was made known that the meetings would not be open to th news media. Harre Demoro, staff writer for the Oakland Tribune and influential Bay Area train enthusiast, reported th a spokesman for the association said that transit officials didn't want to discuss their problems in public. On the agenda of the meetings were a number of technical topics such as the trouble-plagued Long Island Rail Road commuter cars and the structure of the new BART system.

Streetcars Expected to Make a Comeback

In San Francisco for the American Transit Association mee ings, William Ronan, head of the New York State Metropolita Transportation Authority, predicted a new future for the el tric trolley. The City of Boston may borrow a German stree car for testing there. The Federal Government would fund t experiment with a car from Hannover, Germany. The car would be run also in San Francisco, Cleveland, Philadelphia and Pittsburgh. Said Ronan: "I suspect that the evolution of t trolley car might have produced the very vehicle we now seek which could move about our cities without emitting pollutant

In San Francisco, a suggestion to put old-time streetcars on the refurbished Market Street after completion of BART, is meeting with mixed reactions.

(continued from page 9)

crowded city is forgotten--we are suspended in a fairy-tale environment of light and beauty. Even thoughts of the train's imminent demise are pushed aside by the glory of the present moment.

Every so often a person materializes from nowhere and is seen waiting by the tracks. The train duly halts and picks up the passenger, perhaps letting them off a few miles further at some equally obscure point. The train seems to be the only source of transportation for these country people, and is of course the only source of entrance for us from the city into this lovely land. What a wonderful way to experience the beauties of this rugged country in complete comfort and without marring or polluting it!

We detrain at Scotia (Latin for "Scotland") where highway 101 rejoins the track and entrust ourselves to the fine care and Old World comforts of the Scotia Inn. This delightful hotel with its fine dining room is from another era--a time of gracious living and unartificial pleasures. We are told the scrupulously maintained hotel will lose $14,000 a year when the passenger route goes. The inn people weren't even aware the train would really be lost this time. But go it will, unless some miracle saves it, and with it a joyful memory will begin dimming of a little tracked vehicle in the wilds that came about as close to heaven as an earthly trip can.

QUOTES OF THE WEEK ***

"Railpax is the ambivalent product of political forces that neatly match the powerfully different kinds of public sentiment about trains. Congress was intent on stabilizing service and was willing to pay operating subsidies to the private railroads ... The Nixon Administration was eager to relieve the railroad industry of its crippling passenger losses...but determined also that the government not get stuck with the same tab. The result was legislation that limits the initial subsidy to a paltry $40 million and declares Railpax a 'for-profit corporation,' but also, in direct contradiction, invites the annual reports to specify 'the amount of financial assistance needed for operations and capital improvements.'"

--The New Republic, April 10

SLIP OF THE MONTH CLUB ***

"But there is talk of train schedules being doubled by next Fall and running times doubled in the near future."

--Rail Travel Newsletter, April 5
(Remember, you read it here first.)

EDITORIAL: MAKING TRAINS RESPECTABLE AGAIN

We're convinced that the one key ingredient in the hoped for comeback of the passenger train is one that money can't really buy. That's the rather intangible impression that riding the rails is respectable. Rail technology is so old that it's gathered a tarnished image. But regardless of its age, we've never devised a better technology for doing the things it does best. All technological things seem to need upgrading periodically, if only to provide new jobs and new creative outlets for new workers appearing on the scene. So railroads are starting to be altered with such innovations as air-cushion trains and trains that run in a vacuum tube. We applaud all new ideas. Let them be tested by public acceptance or non-acceptance. But we don't have to wait for a new technology to appear before having usable train service. We've got a perfectly good technology right here that can be gradually upgraded. The important factor in persuading people to make use of the technology of the rails is making them feel that it's th "in" thing to do to ride trains. For this task we look forward to Amtrak's advertising campaign and wish them well. If people just know that trains exist, that they are reasonably clean and comfortable, and that somebody out there approves of their riding them, then they will come back to the rails. It's mostly the attitude of those who run the trains, and that attitude for the most part can do nothing but change for the better.

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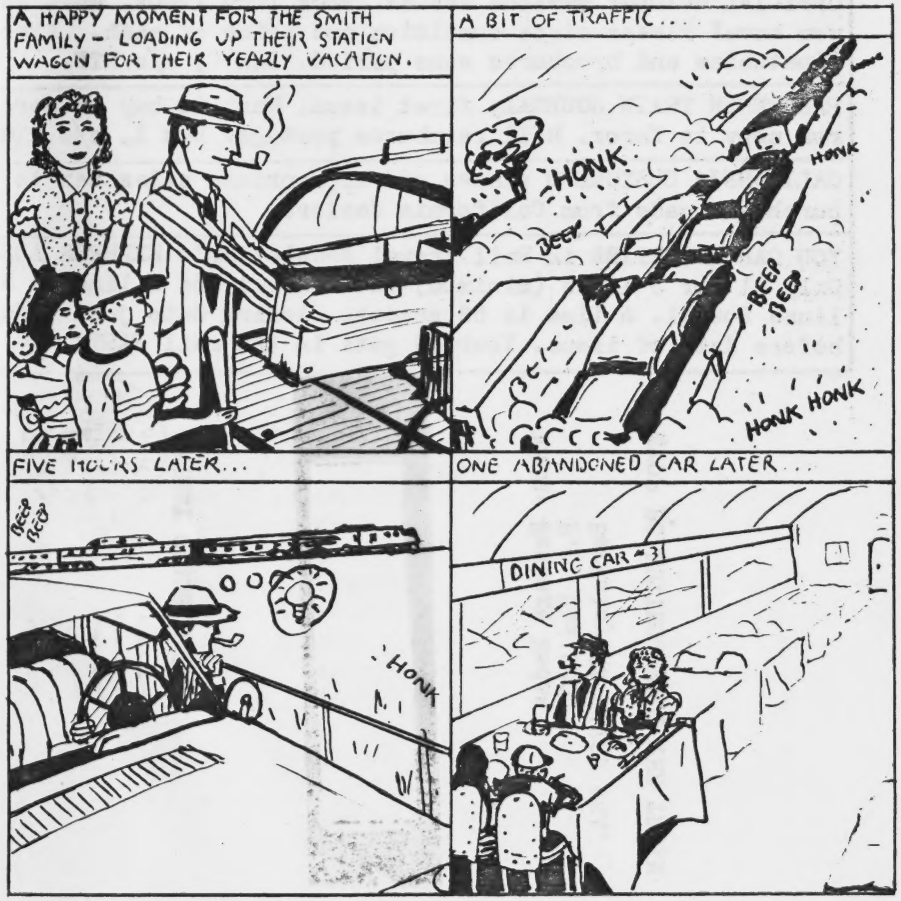
HOW TO KILL A PASSENGER TRAIN — No. 10 of a series

Some rail managers have been heard to say that they can stop worrying about passenger trains now that Railpax is taking them off our hands. This false belief should be put down once and for all. Passenger trains are going to be very much with us for quite a while, and so we cannot afford to relent in our efforts to eliminate them forever. It is perfectly clear that to achieve efficient operations, any railroad must have people out of the way. Thus Railpax is a step in the wrong direction and must be opposed at every point. The best plan for now, however, is to play along with the Railpax people until they officially take over control of the present trains. Once that is done, we can concentrate upon driving away passengers in the same efficient way we did when they were our sole responsibility. Let's bide our time for a spell; we can turn on the heat later and easily make it appear that no one wants to ride trains anymore.